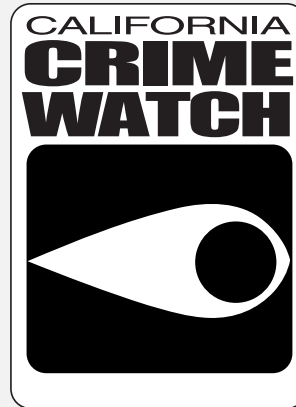


TEACH YOUR CHILDREN...

- to memorize their full names and address, including city and state
- to memorize their telephone number, including area code
- to use both push-button and dial telephones to make emergency, local and long-distance calls and how to reach the operator
- to always check with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home
- never to go into your home if an exterior door is open or a window is broken
- how to work door and window locks and to lock them
- how to get out of the house quickly in case of a fire
- not to go into anyone else's home without your permission
- never to go anywhere with another adult unless you make arrangements for this ahead of time. Adopt a family code word to use if you have to ask a third party to pick up your children, so that your children know the person is safe
- to avoid walking or playing alone
- that a stranger is someone neither you nor they know well
- to run to the nearest public place, neighbor or safe house if they think they are being followed
- to tell you if anyone asks them to keep a secret, offers them gifts or money, or asks to take their picture
- to always tell you about something that happened while they were away from you that made them feel uncomfortable in any way.



Courtesy of

Office of Criminal Justice Planning
1130 K Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 324-9100

For more information on this program in your
community, contact:

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
GRAY DAVIS
GOVERNOR



DO YOU HAVE A LATCHKEY CHILD?

HOW TO MAKE IT SAFER FOR YOUR YOUNG CHILDREN ALONE

OFFICE OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE PLANNING

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
GRAY DAVIS
GOVERNOR



Latchkey children are those who must stay home alone to take care of themselves for some part of the day. An estimated five to twelve million children between the ages of five and 13 are home alone for some part of the day.

Children in self-care are about three times more likely than those supervised by adults to be victimized, be involved in accidents, or engage in delinquent behavior.

Some children enjoy caring for themselves and happily accept the added responsibilities. Others may be lonely, bored or scared. For all of them, the self-care experience is an opportunity for parents to discuss all aspects of safety and crime prevention, as well as build their children's self-esteem, confidence and competence. Studies show that a close relationship with parents may decrease or moderate any negative effects of self-care.

SELF-CARE SKILLS

Parents should focus on setting rules and limits, increasing levels of responsibility, and communicating basic safety information to promote self-care skills. Children who understand why they must be left alone, and know what they may or may not do, will be safer in the home.

HOUSEHOLD ROUTINES

If your children are to be in charge of themselves at home, discuss the routines they are to follow—household chores, pets to tend, homework, family policies on visiting friends or having friends visit them, and what to do when the telephone or doorbell rings. If you are not going to be coming home at your regular time, let your children know!

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Parents of latchkey children should explore community resources, such as these:

- Some community groups run a telephone friend program. This is a number latchkey children can call if they are scared or lonely. It is not meant to replace regular contact with a parent or other trusted adult, but it helps parents whose jobs do not allow unlimited access to a telephone.
- A Safe House Program or similar safety program may be operating in your community. To find out, check with parent-teacher groups or your local law enforcement agency. Similar to block parents, these are safe places where children can go if they are in trouble or need help when their parents are not available. If this program exists, make sure your children know

the locations of the safe houses along their regular routes to and from school. Walk those routes with your children to be sure they are safe. Point out areas such as deserted buildings or abandoned houses that they should avoid.

- Extended day care programs may be local schools or sponsored by neighborhood organizations. If not, you may be able to start one with the help of other concerned parents.

SCHOOL RESOURCES

Check your school's policies concerning absences and releases of your children anyone but you.* Be sure the school will:

- 1) release your child only to persons previously designated by you
- 2) verify any telephone call stating anyone other than a designated person will pick up your child (by calling you back at your listed number)
- 3) notify you whenever your child is not in class

* Some schools have a parent-alert program which uses volunteers to call parents if their children not in school. To start such a program, contact your school or a local volunteer group.
